

# Rites Begin for Birthday of Dr. King

By Martin Well

Washington Post Staff Writer

Weekend activities marking the anniversary of the birth of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., began here yesterday morning with ceremonies on the steps of the District Building.

Other observances also were held around the city and the nation, honoring the slain civil rights leader born Jan. 15, 1929.

One of the speakers, at the District Building, Del. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.), called Dr. King, "the singularly most important man with the singularly most important message for the single most violent century in the history of mankind."

Addressing about 200 persons, Fauntroy said the message of Dr. King, slain in Memphis in April, 1968, was "social change without violence, peace without war."

Mayor Walter E. Washington, one of several speakers at the 45-minute meeting that began at 9:30 a.m. urged: "Let's start talking unity and let's start living unity."

Several other memorial programs were scheduled around the city for last night, including a talk by

School Supt. Hugh J. Scott at the Douglas Memorial Methodist Church, 11th and H Streest NE.

A parade featuring a motorcade and marching band was to proceed to the church from the Martin Luther King Center, 1326 Florida Ave. NE, before Scott's speech.

Civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer was to speak at the New Bethel Baptist Church, as were newly elected school board member Marion Barry and the Rev. Douglas Moore.

Public schools were closed yesterday in Washington and the District government adopted a liberal leave policy for its employees. Banks and most private businesses remained open.

In Atlanta, public school children had yesterday off in commemoration of the birthdate. A commemoration service will be held there today at the Ebenezer Baptist Church where Dr. King was copastor with his father.

Coretta King, Dr. King's widow, is scheduled to appear today with singer Harry Belafonte at a free concert for prisoners at Riker's Island in New York.

On Sunday she will present the documentary film of

her husband's life to representatives of the United Nations.

In Baton Rouge, La., school authorities who had planned to celebrate Dr. King's birth yesterday, can-

celed their plans and closed the schools because of what they said is racial tension. Four persons were killed there Monday in a gun battle between blacks and police.



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Coretta King, widow of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, wants her husband's birthday to be a national holiday.